2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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133 malaw, and Edisto islands to Beaufort; down past St. Helena, Hunting,
103 Fripp, and Parris islands; past Hilton Head and Daufuski to Savannah; from Tybee, Wassaw, Ossabaw, and St. Catherines to Sapelo; past St. Simons and Jekyll islands to Cumberland on the Georgia-Florida border—the Sea Islands guard the coast. The coastline is intersected not
133 only by Winyah and Bull bays, Charleston Harbor, and St. Helena, Port Royal, Sapelo, and St. Andrew sounds, but also by many lesser inlets curling around the Sea Islands. Bounded on one side by the ocean and on the other by the salt marsh, these Sea Islands use the energy of wind and wave to build sand barriers that protect the mainland from storm and surf.

131 The Sea Islands north of Charleston are often older beach resorts such as Pawleys Island and the Isle of Palms. Their residents and vis-
177 itors are mainly white. Other islands are wildlife sanctuaries such as the 31,000-acre Cape Romaine National Wildlife Refuge, the 20,000-
136 acre Tom Yawkee Wildlife Center on South Island, and the 17,000-
185 acre Belle W. Baruch research facilities on Hobcaw Barony. They serve as home for such endangered species as the bald eagle, the Eastern brown pelican, the short-nosed sturgeon, and the loggerhead turtle.
131 Many islands south of Charleston are populated entirely or primarily by blacks, whose venerable folk culture and vivid creole language are
361 the subject of this book. On the coastal mainland adjacent to the Sea Islands are black people who share that folk culture and that creole language. While they are not—strictly speaking—Sea Islanders, in many ways this book tells their story too.

175 For two centuries this coastal region has been the home of enslaved
569 Africans and their descendants. Theirs is a sad but inspiring story. They built—in a very literal sense—the plantations, and they tilled the rich fields of rice, indigo, or Sea Island cotton. Some of the slaves were brought to the Sea Islands by Barbadian planters who migrated to the Carolina colony in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a refuge from the overcrowding of Barbados. Many more were imported directly from Africa. By the American Revolution the slaves, from various parts of Africa and from various ethnic and linguistic groups, had already created a distinctive culture. During the Civil War, when white planter families fled the Sea Islands before the invading Union troops, Sea Island blacks began to cultivate the land for themselves. Hundreds of them joined the Union Army in the celebrated First South Carolina Volunteers. On January 16, 1865, General William Tecumseh

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159 873 I was able to have my children educated. One son is a captain in the Army, one a navigator in the Air Force, two daughters are teaching, one son is a professor of music.

And now there are other folks on this island being encouraged to send their children to get a higher education. We know that some day in the near future Johns Island will be a better place to live.

Rev. G. C. Brown

159 185 873 **ESAU STARTED THE MOVEMENT, WITH HIS OWN CHILDREN IN A LITTLE TRUCK**

When I came here thirty years ago, there was no chance for any schooling beyond the fifth and sixth grade. Esau started the movement by going into Charleston, with his own children in a little truck, taking them to Burke High School.

Then the County eventually consented to pay the tuition at Burke for all who graduated the eighth grade here. And the load kept increasing as the nine little schools on the island educated a group every spring. So they decided it would be better to go ahead and build a school over here with the people, and consolidate rather than to pay this tremendous tuition cost and transportation to Charleston. And that's how Haut Gap High School came to be here.

Esau started it. He's the originator of it. They might not give him credit for getting that school built, but I know 'cause I was here.

Mr. Esau Jenkins

159 **IT'S GOOD TO DO YOUR OWN FIGURING**

465 241 I shall never forget those days when I have worked long on the farm—for fifty cents a day—plowed, lined out straight rows to spread fertilizer in, and come back and put the potatoes in the trench and cover it up.

At that time I was about eighteen or twenty years old. I married when I was seventeen, and because I felt like that wasn't any kind of money to support a family with, I left and went to work somewhat for myself.

My father was a farmer and a carpenter. He was doing carpenter work when he was much younger, and he tried to teach me how to do it. I worked with him for a while, but I didn't like carpenter work too well. I imagine I

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159 or try to get some money to buy blood for him. She said she didn't have any
179 money. Everybody was standing around saying it was wrong, he should
682 not have been shot. But I said, "Are you trying to help this boy? You can't listen to people say it's wrong. If they feel sorry for the boy they'll go down and give him blood."

I said, "Wait a minute, I'll get two of my brother-in-laws and I will go down and give him blood." So we went down. I gave the first pint and my two brother-in-laws gave the other two pints and save his life.

I ask him to tell me the truth what happened. I said to him, "Sammy, just as I gave you my blood to save your life, I will spend every dime and make sacrifice for you to help bring this thing to justice through the court." And he told me just what I've said.

So I went on Broad Street and hired a lawyer. He ask me to find a hundred dollars because he said he have to hire a stenographer to carry to Johns Island. The magistrate might not stick to the word he said in the court, so he need somebody to keep a record.

For a long time we heard nothing about the case. Finally I called up this lawyer and ask him what's wrong. I fussed at him a long time. Then we heard from the other man's lawyer that he wanted to make some kind of deal with Sammy. And we went and met with this lawyer.

I told him, "Mr. Malone shot Sammy with malice of forethought. Now I realize that it's a bad thing to call a woman a liar, but I don't think a man should be shot down for calling somebody a liar."

I said, "You know we have had one man shot dead over a dog and nothing came of it. The family paid a white lawyer to look out for the family and bring this thing to trial and nobody heard anything from it yet. Here's another man being shot for a dog. Now this is bad for race relations."

I told him if he were to come to Johns Island, with one man shot outright and another shot and left for dead, he might not be safe—and he could be ever so right, but because of the things that happened, Negroes began to get malice in their heart for white folks. We can't afford to let things like that go on. We, as people who know better, should make it better and make race relations better.

So he decided to pay us what Sammy had lost. He said that he hadn't felt like he was going to lose the case, but if he had won the case in court and then heard what I had just told him afterward, he never would have felt himself justified.

159 These are the things, then, that motivated me to organize in 1949 a pro-
● 185 gressive movement, that we could help the people to be better citizens, give them a chance to get a better education, and know how to reason and look out for themselves, and take more part in political action.

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Mr. Esau Jenkins

"MR. JENKINS, I WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO BECOME A REGISTERED CITIZEN."

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On Johns Island, in the year of 1948, I saw the condition of the people who had been working on the plantations for many years. And I knew that we were not able to do the things that would need to be done unless we could get people registered citizens.

I operated a bus from Johns Island to Charleston carrying people to their jobs. So I decided to get a group in the bus in the mornings and teach them how to read the part of the Constitution that we have to read before we are able to become registered citizens.

One of these mornings I was teaching the group to read the Constitution, a woman by the name of Alice Wine said to me, "Mr. Jenkins, I would like very much to become a registered citizen, but I cannot read this Constitution because I did not get but just so far in school, and I cannot pronounce these words. But if you are willing to help me, I will show you that I would be one that would be willing to vote in every election."

So I decided to pay more attention to her, and I helped her at more times than I do the regular times when we have school in the bus, to get her prepared to register.

Mrs. Alice Wine

EVERYBODY READ AND GET A PAPER

I come around to registering through Mr. Esau Jenkins. I used to ride his bus, and he said, "I want to carry you down to register." I said, "I can't read those hard thing yet," and he get the book and he start to learn me.

He start to help me read and when I get to them hard words I feel like jump it. My tongue so heavy until I couldn't pronounce the words, you know. But he said to me, "No, the hard word is the things for you to learn." And so me and them girls (and some of the girls could read 'em--dum-de-dum-dum-dum--right on through, right on through, but I couldn't do it), we tried 'em.

Then he take we up to a registration board on Society Street, and we get in line. Everybody read and get a paper, read and get a paper. And I be in line next to this girl, and she read and she stammer. And then the man put me for read, and I read those things just like I been know 'em. And I didn't know them things, I swear!

Mr. Jenkins figure I going fail. He been right outside there on the corner for listen. And when I come out he said, "Miss Wine, you get it?" I say, "Yes, sir." Say, "Well, sir!" I say, "I thought I couldn't read them hard thing." Them thing was *too* hard!

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Mr. Esau Jenkins

EVERYBODY IS JUBILANT FOR THE HIGHLANDER FOLK SCHOOL

159 641 666 185 The Negroes outnumber the white here 'round about two and a third to one. The potential voting strength for Negroes is about two thousand against around one thousand white, if we could get them all registered. They have been doing it much faster now, because I know the last ten years before the new registration started, it took us ten years to get seventy-five or a hundred person registered, and then starting back in 1957–1958 it got better. Since then we put nearly four hundred people on the books. They are civic-minded now, and they want to take part in it. I think so much progress has been made in the last few years due to the citizenship school that was started here by the Highlander Folk School.

159 893 185 I first attended Highlander in 1954. They asked each individual to give the immediate problem in his locality. My immediate problem was adult education, because so many person were here who couldn't read and write and I know this condition, because I would have been almost in the same condition if I didn't go back to school. So I asked the Highlander Folk School officials if it were possible to help us set up night schools for these people to help them become better citizens.

They said if I could find a place, could find a teacher, they could help take care of the expenses. So they did. And that was very, very important to helping us to get as many persons registered on this island.

159 666 893 185 And then people on Wadmalaw and Edisto Islands found out later the reason Johns Island was so successful in registering Negroes. They ask me if it's possible to help them to get an adult school. So the next year when I went to Highlander, when it comes time for immediate problem again, I brought in Wadmalaw and Edisto, and they again say they will help if I could find a place and the teachers. I found the place, and today Wadmalaw registered more Negroes than ever registered in the history of Wadmalaw. In the 1964 election Wadmalaw had about two hundred Negro votes for Johnson. Most of the white folks were voting for Goldwater, but Negroes voted enough to hold it in the Democratic column. That's the only area in Charleston County that went for Johnson.

The same thing is happening on Edisto and all over the county. In 1954 in the county there were 'round about five or six thousand Negroes registered. In 1964 almost fourteen thousand. So everybody is jubilant for the Highlander Folk School, who have helped them to see the light.

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Mr. Esau Jenkins

KNOWING HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

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We had gotten quite a few people registered through that adult citizenship school, but they did not have the political education or understanding of voting. So we decided to teach them what the ballot means. I started what we called the "second step" political education school, because the people who registered to vote would vote because we told them to vote.

There were many persons who did not know how many men in the House of Representatives; why Charleston County has eleven in the House; how many men in the Senate; how many congressional districts we have in South Carolina; who are the men elected and sent to Washington to represent these two districts. We feel that if these people know about these things, they will be more interested in voting, and they will help others.

As you know as well as I do, that if a person doesn't know a football game, a basketball game, neither a baseball game, he hears other people laugh and sees how other persons play, but he doesn't know *who* plays well, because he doesn't know the game.

The same thing goes with some of the people who don't know anything about political action, so we felt like it was our responsibility to teach those people and have them well-informed.

159 873 185 (666)

Along with political education, we have taught a good many persons how to sign checks, fill out money orders, how to crochet, how to sew, how to fill out blanks for their drivers' licenses. I think it was a great success.

Then after I was elected President of the Citizens' Committee of Charleston and Charleston County, I set up what we call a voter registration and information center, to which place people will come in for information. Whatever information they need, they come to this center.

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Mr. Esau Jenkins

"MAN, ESAU JENKINS' NAME ON THE VOTING MACHINE!"

159 666 891 Then I ran for the school trusteeship on this island. I ran knowing that I wouldn't have won unless a miracle had been done. They had three white persons to run. I made four. And I came out third, so I got more votes than one of the white candidates. That scared some of the white folks here, and the man who is on the county council decided that they would change voting for trustees on the school board. They would have it be appointed because Johns Island strength was growing too much.

The reason why I ran is because I wanted the Negroes to know that it is their privilege to go into any office they're qualified to handle. They are taxpayers and they have just as much right to run for public office as the white persons. I ran because some Negroes thought that if a Negro name ever was placed on a voting machine, that person would be killed. Or they thought that a Negro's name couldn't be placed on a voting machine.

159 666 And so I ran and my name was placed in alphabetical order and they saw it. And when one of the guys went in and saw my name, he went and told the rest, say, "Man, Esau Jenkins' name on that voting machine," says, "You better go on down there and vote." And that year we had about ninety-nine percent of the Negroes who registered vote. Encourage them ever since to vote.

Mr. Esau Jenkins

WE'RE NOT FOR SALE

(661) After we got started and the Negroes started registering, then a bribe was made to me. They sent someone to offer me whatever I want if I would stop teaching Negroes to register and vote and go along with the white folks. Well, I didn't accept it.

159 891 661 ●185 My argument at that time was that we need a high school on Johns Island and we need to get our children off their feet who are walking ten miles per day to try to get an education. They walk in the rain, in the cold, and the sleet and we believe it cause a health hazard. So I told this man who offered me the money, "We're not for sale, and we're only going to support

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people who are willing to see to it that our children will get a high school, plus transportation to take them to and from school."

The white kids were riding in school buses, and the buses were warm when they got into it. When they got to the school, the schools were warm. 159 Yet our children had to walk between eight and ten miles per day, go to a 89 cold school with no heat. The teachers that teach the school, they live in 177 Charleston—fifteen or eighteen miles away—and the children have to stand 185 outside until the teachers come. Then when the teachers come, if they didn't [895] have any wood, they got to go out in back of the school and get wood to make up the fire. Whether it raining, whether it cold, whether it snowing, those children have to walk there, and after they got the fire started, it being so cold, I don't think they could concentrate so well. And beside that they

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have forty to fifty children to one teacher, and have to carry 'em from scratch to seventh grade.

So we know that was a terrible condition, and that's the condition that I want to try to eliminate. And that's my reason for not taking this bribe. I know that we wouldn't have gotten anywhere, not as long as I was willing to take bribe and go along with the white folks. I had made some enemy by not taking the bribe. I had made some of my people afraid of me because I kept on fighting for the Negroes' right. But I didn't stop.

The white folks cut off this one big plantation that I used to haul to, as I had three buses and two trucks. Sometimes I make sixty dollars, sixty to eighty dollars a day, with three or four vehicle--twenty dollars for each one --to carry the people there. They cut that off, but I wouldn't stop. I keep on driving and keep on fighting.

Since we have gotten the high school, now we have had quite a few children graduated from the high school here on the island. Since then we have been able to get this consolidated grammar school, and we have buses.

Mr. Esau Jenkins

WE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE WHEN WE GO INTO COURT

I'll tell you another way voting was able to help us. I could remember not too long ago, we didn't have a chance when we go into court. I remember a day I was riding with a man coming to Johns Island from Charleston, and a white person ran into the back of his truck. When we stop to find out what happen to the person, the law took side with the person who ran into the back of his truck, and he had to go to court.

We all thought that the judge would say, "Well, somebody ran into the back of the truck, certainly seem like that person is wrong." Unfortunately, he said that the colored man was wrong. He didn't have a chance in the court. But we decided to change that thing by getting people to see the importance of citizenship, registration and voting.

We got them to be interested in organizing what we call the Progressive Club. I emphasize the word "progressive" which mean look upward, do something better. And in this club we told them that if you're not registered

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159 to start with, you're going to have to *become* a registered citizen if you join.
666 And we ask every individual to pay twenty-five cent per month. For what?
474 Just in case when you go into these unjust courts, your money pools and
692 somebody'll stand the bonds, or pay the fine. Now things are changed. The time would come when this same magistrate who have never listened to Negroes would need their vote.

159 One year when he ran for the third time, the white folks decided to vote
177 against him—not all the white folks, just about fifty percent of them. And
666 he was thinking about dropping out of the election. He came to me and ask, "What can you all do? I understand that the white folks is against me because in the court sometime ago I was little bit lenience with Negro."
664 So I told him if he would promise that he would treat Negroes better,
185 make them realize that they are human being when they come into the court, not charge them for everything or just assume that they are wrong, but just give them what belongs to them—if they are right, let them know they are right—I said, "We will vote for you. We got a few Negroes voting. If you got fifty percent of your people, the rest of the Negroes certainly would turn the tide."

And when that night came, he won by the many Negroes had registration certificate. That change the situation. That magistrate now, whenever our people go into the court, he is very frank and fair with us. And so for that reason, we felt like the more we could get people registered, the better it would be.

Mrs. Alice Wine

HE IS A WONDERFUL CONQUEROR

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474 We start the Progressive Club with about two or three hundred head of people in '48 or '49. We used to meet in Moving Star Hall every third Sunday and pay twenty-five cents a head. And after we done pay out for that piece of property we got now, we stop paying monthly dues.

159 There was a schoolhouse there, but we turn 'em into a store after we
443 buy 'em. We put all our money together and open 'em up. And we call 'em
474 Progressive Club. We been growing and growing. We is still in debt, but
185 we are going on. And Mr. Jenkins, he is so good, he is so kind, so soft-

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159 hearted, he don't care what the people said, but he going on. He is a won-
474 derful conqueror, I tell you that.
443 And John Smalls, he just stick and stand right there as a sale-man. Sell
185 in the store. He is the head of buying for the store. Bill Saunders is the Manager of the store. And I am the Treasurer. Mr. Jenkins is the President. So we stick and stand, thick and thin, right there.

159 I think this the best place on Johns Island. I say to myself, "is a Chris-
578 tian place" because the good Lord help us so far in all these years. We ain't had no bad quarrels yet. 'Cause they always divide a row. I not say no row
621 don't be there. They be there. But if they know, Esau or John, they will divide the row. They will ask them nicely to quit. Or they put them out. We never had nobody hurt one another yet.

Mr. Esau Jenkins

NOW WE CALL IT SEA ISLAND CENTER

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443 The Progressive Club grew a little bit. We finished paying for the old
474 building. Then after we have taken out what it takes to run the store for the
185 year, each member (thirteen people) gets a dividend. The first year it was twenty-five dollars. Next year each person got thirty dollars. I felt like it was some motivation for all of them to find out that we are now getting something back.

159 And then I said to them that since this building was bought old and is
185 about to outlive its usefulness, that we need to build something that will be
345 serviceable to not only this community, but for the whole sea islands. I
347 thought that a place large enough for basketball and other games and workshops would be something that could bring in other people to give ideas what could be done for the community and other communities. I suggested to them that this ought to be done. I felt like if we got together and work heartily together, cooperatively together, that it could be done.

We have one or two person oppose my idea about a huge building like that, for fear that we wouldn't be able to pay for the thing, or that we wouldn't even be able to get it built to start with. One of the members stated that he hoped he could live long enough to see one side of the wall go up. When I was told that, I said maybe he didn't feel he have long to live. I guess he was surprised to see it go up.

159 One member couldn't believe that Negroes could get together and pool
185 their money and buy something and get along all right. It took me ten years to convince him. He told somebody that when I first started the Progressive Club he thought I was looking out for Esau Jenkins and the family. This person told me, "But I found out when you went and bought that place. The money was loaned to you, and you put all as many names as possible on

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the deed, and let them run it, and just check with them once a month, so they believe you meant good for them. And now I have all the confidence in you." Evidently that's the reason why it took me ten years to make him realize we can get along together.

The whole entire group work faithfully with me now. I think we are doing very well because of the fact that we are working together. And more people are using the place now. They see the need for it.

They didn't have any place to go on this island for recreation. That's one reason we built this, and then call it "sea island" center instead of community center, because we serve James Island, Johns Island and Wadmalaw. Unless they play in somebody's yard, there's not a place where they can have a proper game on any one of these islands.

Our school doesn't have a gym, probably won't ever have one. In October of this year the basketball teachers came down to the Progressive

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159 345 527 528 893 Club and asked us to let them play basketball there. They'd been playing outside during this basketball season, and they'd been getting beat eighty-something to twenty.

159 345 893 595 Last night we had the school come in and they had a talent show, and had a record hop behind it, and I understand about two hundred head or more were there. Then we started a Boy Scout here. We are interested in getting the boys because we feel like it would be a good thing for young boys to be a better citizen. They are planning to have their programs at the Club.

159 345 595 Then we have a young citizenship group that we organized. It concerns itself with race relations and voter registration or everything that goes to make the human being happy. They got a volume of encyclopedia to study a variety of words that they might have a vocabulary large enough to answer questions. And they feel happy about it, because that's one of the things kept them from running up and down the street and have nothing else to do.

159 185 I stated before that we emphasize the word "progressive." If we are going to be progressive on this island, we still have a lot to do.

Mr. Esau Jenkins

THOSE TYPEWRITER CAME FALLING DOWN IN THE SCHOOL, OVERNIGHT

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We need better equipment and better instruction in our schools to make our children better able to compete with other children. I felt there are so many Negroes whose children wouldn't be college material, and so many Negroes' income wouldn't allow them to send their children to college. If a child goes to school and just take up home economics and some agriculture, they wouldn't able to use it when they come out, and they be just as bad or worse off than a child who hasn't gone to high school who will go on the farm and work and never think about it.

The child who had been through high school feel bad scrubbing somebody's floor or working on the farm--much worse than the child who never had any training. So my suggestion was that the school give shorthand and typing.

I told Robert Johnson, a man who is very energetic in doing things, to go to the Haut Gap School and ask the principal if it be possible to get in some typewriters and give shorthand and typing, that our girls who would want to be secretary and can't go to college would come out and know how

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159 185 873 to do something. They could take dictation and maybe could be hired in some of these lawyers' offices.

The principal told him that the boys and girls there don't have the aptitude for that kind of thing. In fact he said that on the national average the boys and girls who finish Haut Gap School are no more than about tenth grade scholars. So Mr. Johnson say, "I surprise to hear you say that, because it seem you ought to try to correct that kind of thing, if it be true."

The principal sent Mr. Johnson to the man who is the supervisor over the schools here on Johns Island. The supervisor told him that the typewriters would cost a lot of money. If he insist that his daughter or some other girls take typing and shorthand, they could go to the Negro high school on James Island. Mr. Johnson contention was that that would be too far away.

159 185 179 873 Then I found out one day that the white high school on Johns Island had typing and shorthand. A white man came to my restaurant to fix the cigarette machine and said to me, "Esau, I congratulate you for sending your children to college." He said, "I couldn't send my daughter, but she has a good job. She works for one of the lawyers downtown."

I ask him, "Where did your daughter get her training?"

He said, "St. John's High."

I said, "St. John's High doesn't teach shorthand and typing."

He said, "Oh, yes it does. That's where my daughter learned and she's making good now."

Well that burn me a little bit when he told me that, so I brought it up that Sunday in the PTA, and I talk a long time about it. I told the principal and the teachers, "This is our children being hurt. I went all out for a high school here on Johns Island—I guess a lot of people were afraid to walk with me, some of my own race—because I was fighting white folks. Yet I was fighting that our tax money would be beneficial to our children. Now we need typewriters here. If we don't get it, certainly I'll try to find anybody who I know, as many as I know, to send to St. John's High School."

Well, I know they didn't want the Negroes to come there at that time, because you know this thing hadn't gotten full under way yet about integration. But we could make some trouble.

So I was told that Monday morning somebody rush to the superintendent's office and said, "You know, Esau talk a lot down there yesterday, and that crazy Negro say he'll send somebody to St. John's High School." He say, "The best thing you better do, you better try to get them typewriters."

So those typewriter came falling down in the school, overnight just

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159 about. I don't think they got the person to teach shorthand yet. Some of the
185 teachers said it seemed like I was against them. I tell them, "I wasn't against
873 any of you, but I asked you not to get in the way. You're not going to stand
177 in the way of our children's education. You got yours."

Mr. Esau Jenkins

I AM TRYING TO GET HELP THROUGH THE WAR ON POVERTY

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Because I feel there needs to be work here for our young people, and care for our children so their parents can also make a good wage, I am trying to get help through the War on Poverty.

I told the poverty committee that I am a native of Johns Island. I said that I have been working over the years trying to obliterate ignorance, to promote health, social, educational and civic welfare, and to combat juvenile delinquency and to secure a more rich and abundant life to ourselves and to our posterity. I told them that we have obligated ourselves apd denied ourselves and begged and borrowed money to help build a center that our boys and girls and adults could have a place on the island where they can have games and workshops and where we have had some folk song festivals which have brought together people of both races.

Now our people are asking us to assist them in many areas in which we cannot give help unless we get some kind of grant. They are asking for day care for preschool children so that they do not have to keep older children home from school while the parents are out working. They are asking for classes which will help them to earn some kind of living here—sewing, crafts, adult remedial reading, music, some kinds of mechanical skills. They are asking for the creation of some jobs for children who have left school, and after-school jobs for school children.

These requests have come from parents who make from $800 to $2,000 a year and have from two to eight children in their homes.

If we receive the grant we have asked for, we can employ twelve or fourteen persons for the Progressive Club Sea Island Center's program—a director, assistant director, dietician, secretaries, teachers, assistants, and a janitor.

We promised the committee if they would give us this badly needed grant, which would help alleviate the cycle of poverty in this area, we are willing to do our part in seeing it become a reality.

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Mr. Esau Jenkins

OUT OF EGYPT I AM GOING TO CALL MY SONS

159 185 443 474 Now if anybody is happy, it ought to be Esau Jenkins, the person who is talking here to you. Why? Twelve years and some months ago in this community, I organized a club—what we call the Progressive Club.

You folks have helped me start as a man and form a group. You are selling groceries, you are selling gasoline. Besides that, some time the early part of this month you have paid out all your debt and yet left $175 to add to your store.

159 185 178 When I organized this Progressive Club, I could count the number of voters on my one hand, and I don't have but five fingers.

In twelve years you have caused this whole island to change. Today you got school buses running by your door and picking up your children, carrying them to a high school on Johns Island. Today you can say that my children will be educated—at least get a high school education on Johns Island.

(666) Today you could say in the last election we built up our voting strength so high until the white men in Charleston have to ask us to be in the polls on Johns Island and Edisto and Wadmalaw. Negroes have helped work for the Democratic party.

Now you could not have said that twelve years ago because you didn't vote. You didn't have a school. But today you have children getting ready to compete with anybody's children, because of your cooperation.

My friends, I want you to help me that I may go on, come what may. There are any number of times that I have walked alone. There are a lot of people who are afraid, because if they be seen walking along with me, the white folks might say, "Well, he is one of these persons who are fighting me."

But share it with Esau Jenkins, and thank God that God has helped us. We made an achievement that we are not ashamed of. You don't know how much you have done, friends—how many people are talking about what you have done; how many people are reading about what you have done.

Together let us go—sisters, brothers, blacks, whites, yellows, whatnot. We are all God's people, so we got to go together. And friends, I think all over the world today, people who love freedom are saying this morning, "Out of Egypt I'm going to call my sons."

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Mr. Abraham Jenkins

PEOPLE DON'T SEE THAT "BIG SANTA CLAUS" THEY ONCE THOUGHT OF

179 464 People saw what happened when all that money came in with Kiawah and yet no one that I know got in any of those administrative positions out there. You find a few people got into the more menial jobs. Ninety percent of the jobs are in the lowest level, and then maybe five to ten percent are in a higher bracket, but not up in the really well-paid bracket. So people don't see that "big Santa Claus" they once thought of.

Mr. William Saunders

THEY WERE NEVER CONCERNED ABOUT THE PEOPLE THAT LIVE ON THOSE ISLANDS

●185 I get pretty upset about things. There was a million dollars spent on turtles on Kiawah, because these people were concerned about the turtles. But they were never concerned about the people that live on those islands.

177 491 (178) Still, as long as I can get some help from those people, then I don't have any problem with their lives. The moment all those rich people begin staying on Kiawah and Seabrook, they begin to improve the roads. Although it was built for them, I use it. It's accessible to everyone. And the people on Kiawah and Seabrook are pretty much conservationists, so they back most anything leaving things the way they are.

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Mr. Abraham Jenkins

THE PEOPLE WERE TREATED SO BADLY

Prior to the establishment of the Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation there was no medical care on the islands and everybody had to go to the emergency room in Charleston. The people were treated so badly by the nurses and sometimes the physicians. It was segregated there. And many people died trying to get to medical care waiting on the bridges to open and close.

My father was a fighter. In my case, I retired as a major in the air force in 1971 and moved back home. I figured I'd come back to give my daddy help. I was in a position to help him do some things. I grew up around this work and I guess I would have come back eventually. I spoke to my daddy. He never said I should come back, but just the way he spoke, I knew I should. After talking to some other people, I knew the work needed to be done. When I looked at the groundwork that had been laid by these people, and saw the intensity of their effort and how much sacrifice had been made, I know I said to myself, "I gave the military twenty years, I can give Sea Island twenty." Several of us started trying to put a health program together for the islands.

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

PEOPLE STARTED SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

Our community consists of the sea islands west and south of Charleston---five islands altogether. So when we started looking at the needs of the people, we tried to organize a local health council on each of these islands. Either we created or we got to be a part of an existing organization on each island. We started getting input from all of the islands and we started trying to meet their needs. We eventually started dealing with environmental issues, social work, health education, and nutrition.

When some people became interested in the problems of migrant workers on the islands, Rev. Goodwin, my daddy, Bill Saunders, McKinley Washington, and others said, "Well, it's all right to be doing something for the migrants, but whatever the migrants are experiencing for six or eight weeks, the people on the islands are experiencing for the whole year. So whatever we do, it should not be limited just to the migrants." Some of the first issues that were identified were health issues.

They decided they needed to form a rural organization that would deal with these problems the people were having. That was the beginning of Rural Missions, Inc. It started out of the Progressive Club and was formed to address local issues on Johns Island. But then people started seeing the bigger picture and the similarity of the situation on the other islands.

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Mr. William Saunders

THE SEA ISLAND HEALTH CARE CORPORATION WAS A POWER BASE

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I think the housing, the health care facility, you have to look at it as an elevation, an improvement. We had the foresight with the health center to add the nursing home and the home for the elderly, so even when they took our health center grant away from us, we owned the building and we owned the property. The health center is now being run by the City of Charleston. The taking over was really a political party fight. In 1980 the Republican party needed to be able to say that they got something going on in the community, so what they did, they found problems with a lot of stuff that was already there—got rid of the Board, got a new Board, and allowed it to function.

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Anytime you're talking about being able to control something, anytime you're talking about power, then you're talking about something real that was done. The Sea Island Health Care Corporation was a power base that we put together that exists. It really exists today. We've got forty acres of very choice land. The city now wants twelve acres of it. That's the kind of thing where Esau and others were thinking ahead and did things in advance, and we planned that one way ahead of everybody. And it's there. We've got control of the nursing home and the housing.

Mr. William Saunders

THERE'S A LOT OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH AND POVERTY

Our goal for the Comprehensive Health Center was that it would serve everybody on the islands and would be totally independent. The first director, Jim Martin, was a real strategist. He and I used to spend hours dreaming and scheming about what could be, how you could work politically within the system and make things work. Jim was a past master at that.

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Beyond just providing health services, for awhile the Health Care Corporation was the biggest employer on the island. We found that when people were working, they were healthier simply because they were making their own living. There's a lot of relationship between health and poverty.

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We were looking to be able to sell health care to Kiawah and to Seabrook and to the other big interests on the island, which would have actually made the health center self-sufficient. You would not have needed any governmental money. We were just about there when they took it away from us. We don't have control of the daily operation of the clinic. But the people who are using it have to pay us rent. It's a good bit less service than it used to be. But it could come back. The whole facility is there, so the possibilities are unlimited.

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Mr. Gerald Mackey

BLACK YOUTH NEED POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

156 Many of the problems that young people face—substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, illiteracy, suicide attempts—are a direct result of these young people having a poor self-image and low self-esteem. So the first step in finding a solution is helping these young people to feel good about themselves. A lot of the young people are insecure. They fall prey to peer pressure because they don't feel good about themselves. They don't love themselves for one reason or another.

156 554 Black youth need positive role models. When you look at the television or read the newspapers, or the history books, blacks are rarely shown in a positive light. As a result many of the young people feel that blacks have not made any significant contribution to America. That causes them to feel negatively about themselves and about their ancestors.

156 554 871 (199) I attended a segregated elementary school and a segregated high school on Johns Island. My childhood dream was to become a teacher. My black teachers were my role models and I always looked up to them. These people worked extremely hard with the boys and girls on Johns Island—giving us lots of support and encouragement. They cared enough about us to go the extra mile in spite of the limited resources that were given to black schools at that time.

The most important influence in my life was my mother, Ms. Wilhelmina Mackey, who died this year. My mother wanted her children to be educated and to "make something" of themselves. She was a stern disciplinarian. She took a no-nonsense approach to education and social behavior. (199) Because of the Jim Crow laws of the South, and because of extenuating circumstances, she did not have the opportunity to get a high school education. She went only as far as the eighth grade, but she was a smart woman. She worked hard to have her children educated. And she also saw to it that God and religion played a very important role in our lives. My mother's strong desire to see us succeed helped me to develop self-discipline at an early age.

156 I would urge young people today to develop self-discipline in all aspects of life. They need the initiative to move ahead and do those things that should be done.

871 At Wesley, we've set up a weekly communitywide tutorial session. The response to that program has been overwhelming. We have people who have specialized in all subjects coming in to work on an individual basis with kids so that they could get the time and the attention they need.

185 I believe that those of us who have been blessed by God, and have been fortunate enough to be successful, have a moral responsibility to help those less fortunate than ourselves—especially the young people. We need to concentrate on working with our youth, because they are our future.

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Mr. Gerald Mackey

YOU NEVER KNOW THE NUMBER OF LIVES YOU TOUCH

The employment situation for young people nationwide is extremely frustrating. I work with the division of personnel for the Charleston County School District. We have problems getting black teachers in the school system. For example, Charleston County hired approximately 224 teachers at the beginning of the school year and approximately 21 of the 224 were black. When you look at the racial composition of the district, you have more black than white students. So we have a problem with black teachers and administrators coming into the district. It's one of the reasons why the desegregation suit brought by the Justice Department and others is now going on.

In some schools in the county, we have no black teachers. In some of the larger schools, you might have two or three. There is no equity in student-teacher ratio in terms of black and white. So the kids have very few black role models in terms of teachers. That's a very sad indictment on a system when kids come up from kindergarten through high school and not see a black teacher. Another argument that we make in the county is that blacks are not going into teaching. They're considering other options like science or math, and they're going into the industries. They're studying computer science and engineering and medicine, and they're not going into teaching. But it's going to be sad again for the kids.

I wouldn't trade my experience of being a classroom teacher for anything in the world. You never know the number of lives you touch. Teaching is very rewarding.

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

I THINK THAT'S A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

With the Sea Island Health Care Corporation, the Citizens' Committee, the Ministerial Alliance, Johns Island's going to be a better place to live. With the dedication we have now we have turned that exodus of young people leaving the island around. We have seen some engineers and attorneys and professional people coming back home to live. And if they're not living here, they're still making a contribution by coming back periodically, making their presence known, sharing their knowledge, or making a financial contribution. There's much more of that now than there was ten years ago. I think that's a step in the right direction.

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*Mr. Myles Horton**

THE PEOPLE OF JOHNS ISLAND DESERVE TRIBUTE

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The citizenship schools were inspired by Esau Jenkins who was trying to teach his Johns Island bus passengers to pass the South Carolina literacy test required for voting. In a 1955 Highlander Folk School workshop he had asked for help. In an effort to respond, we spent the next two years acquainting ourselves with the culture of the island and with the people. We found out by living and working with them what their problems were and that they wanted to be voting citizens.

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Bernice Robinson was chosen to teach the first citizenship school because she respected the people and, having had no teaching experience, would be nonjudgmental and experimental. She began the first class in the back room of a cooperative store by saying, "I am not a teacher; we are here to learn together. You're going to teach me as much as I am going to teach you."

The curriculum was developed day by day. They learned to write letters, to order from catalogs, and fill out money orders. They made stories about the vegetables they grew and the tools they used, the chairs and tables in the room. They moved on to reading the Declaration of Human Rights, which hung on the wall, and the South Carolina constitution, which was a prerequisite of becoming a voter.

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Music and singing familiar songs livened up the long evenings and blended with the joy of learning. Singing sea island folk songs, spirituals, and protest songs helped build the group's consciousness and boosted morale as together they tackled the difficult task of learning to read and write.

This pioneer citizenship school, which met biweekly for three months, grew from fourteen to thirty-seven students. It was soon followed by a second school. Out of the first two schools, sixty people, two-thirds the total enrollment, passed the literacy test for voting. That is, they "graduated."

Esau Jenkins had an explanation for this accomplishment. He said, "No one wants anything more than to be a first-class citizen. That is what makes you learn what you have to learn." Their motivation was for an achievable goal rooted in their culture. Although each individual had to learn to read for him or herself, they studied as a group, they supported and encouraged each other as they painfully struggled to read. As they took the first steps in learning to read and write, they made use of what they had learned without delay. The process that evolved was simple and easy to explain and could easily be adopted elsewhere, making the multiplying process easy.

The enthusiastic new voters immediately spread the word to neighboring South Carolina and Georgia sea islands. Soon the citizenship schools were started on Edisto and Wadmalaw islands, and before the three months period ended, half those enrolled had learned to read and write well enough to pass

*Founder and former director of the Highlander Folk School.

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the literacy test and become registered voters. Some had organized their community for discussions of civic issues and voter registration campaigns. Later, as on Johns Island, they would run for public office and provide leadership in the emerging civil rights movement.

In 1961 the citizenship school program was transferred from Highlander to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In the meantime Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson had developed a residential program for training volunteers who wanted to be citizenship school teachers.

Before becoming the educational arm of the SCLC, the number of teachers trained were counted in the hundreds, but after the transfer, Septima Clark reported that they were counted in the thousands. More impressive than these figures was the vitality of the educational process which set in motion a liberating force that gave dignity and collective power to thousands of black people throughout the South.

The people of Johns Island deserve tribute for the role they played in the origin and development of a citizenship/literacy movement that became a vital part of the civil rights movement and has achieved international recognition. Special tribute is due to the first pioneer citizenship school, created by a teacher who had never taught before and her students who had never been to school, and to the coordinator Septima Clark and especially to Esau Jenkins whose idea it was in the first place.

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Mrs. Septima Clark

AFTER I CAME BACK FROM HIGHLANDER, I DECIDED I SHOULD GET ESAU TO GO

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I knew Esau Jenkins when he was a boy of fourteen and came to my school to learn how to read. All his life Esau devoted himself to improving conditions on Johns Island.

Esau had a bus that he drove from Johns Island to Charleston and back, carrying tobacco workers and longshoremen to work. One morning one of the women on the bus made Esau a proposal. "I don't have much schooling, Esau," she said to him. "But I would like to be somebody. I'd like to hold up my head with other people, I'd like to be able to vote. Esau, if you'll help me a little when you have the time, I'll be glad to learn the laws and get qualified to vote. If I do, I promise you I'll register and I'll vote."

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That appealed to Esau, and he agreed to help her. He had a portion of the South Carolina laws typed up, those that pertained to registration and voting, and he passed them out to the people who rode his bus. To those who couldn't read or couldn't understand the language of the law, he patiently explained the requirements. When he was waiting for his passengers to assemble or when his bus arrived in town a few minutes early, he would discuss those laws with them.

The woman who asked Esau for help was Mrs. Alice Wine. She had a marvelous ability to memorize; she memorized the whole section of the constitution that they were studying. Soon she was ready to go and be registered.

While she was standing in line awaiting her turn, one of the women ahead of her, in reading a section of the constitution, mispronounced the word "miscegenation." Immediately Mrs. Wine pronounced it correctly. The registrar spoke out sharply, "No coaching, please!" When it came her time, Mrs. Wine "read" every word perfectly by reciting from memory. She was given her registration certificate, and she was one happy soul.

But Mrs. Wine wasn't satisfied. She really wanted to know how to read. She asked Esau if there was any kind of school where she could learn to read and write.

After I came back from going to Highlander the first time, I decided that I should get Esau to go. We went up there and found out that many people could talk to him and give him help.

Myles Horton had been into Charleston to try to get people to come up to Highlander. Now, through Esau, he had a way to reach people. One Christmas Myles went down there with his children and spent the whole Christmas season just walking around the island and talking. He stayed in Esau's house, and the people really enjoyed him. Myles had a way of speaking to people that made them become endeared to him.

Myles always told people about the injustices that were there, that they had not seen. He said, "Now, you know, any day I can go back with my own people and not have to endure these things, but you have to live with them always. I want you to see if you can get to the place where you can register and vote. You need to think about what you can do for these children that are coming along."

(113) Septima's words are from her autobiographical book *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement*, written with Cynthia Stokes Brown and published in 1986 by Wild Trees Press, Box 378, Navarro, Calif. 95463.

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871 read and to sign their name. And they would say quietly, "I can't write" or "I
895 can't read that well," and that's how I found out where each one of those
(212) students was on that first night.

The people we worked with were denied an education and so we had to
871 teach them how to read and write. I don't remember when they got a full
872 nine months elementary school on Johns Island. They didn't have anything
185 but a little four-month school when Septima was teaching over there. When the people needed them to work in the fields, the farmers just went and knocked on the school house and the kids had to come out. So they didn't even get a full four-month education.

871 And then they told me the things they wanted to learn, which was to be
212 able to write letters to their relatives that live elsewhere and read letters from
185 them, rather than have to carry them to the white people they worked for to read them for them. They wanted to know how to do money orders. So then I started to teach them what they wanted to learn.

871 And of course they were conscious of the voting process because Esau
666 had run for school board in 1954. He didn't win because he didn't have
185 enough blacks registered on the island to put him in. They had three positions open and he came in fourth. Well, after that election they started appointing the school board members. Therefore, the students knew the importance of getting registered to vote. So it wasn't hard to sell them that idea. But like I said, I worked with them on the things they wanted to know first.

We had no idea of the school spreading. We were just doing what Esau asked us to do for his people on Johns Island. Well, they started registering to vote, and then they encouraged other people to go and register to vote. People on Johns Island were registering to vote so fast that people on Wadmalaw wanted it. Then Edisto wanted it. Then we wound up in the north area of Charleston with two classes.

Mrs. Bernice Robinson

871 185 THE PROGRAM WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

By 1961 so many people were asking for the program from all around the South. Myles felt it was getting to the point where we were spreading ourselves too thin. The best thing for us to do was to contact organizations and have them send people in to Highlander to be trained as teachers. We would work with them for one week and train them as teachers. Then they could go back and set up classes.

871 And then we talked about second-stage classes—political education. Our
641 classes didn't just stick to reading and writing to register to vote. We talked
185 about the power that was in the hands of the people if they know the set-up of the government. So we talked about the set-up and who you go to for what.

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871 641 185 (664) We always told the teachers that if there wasn't an organization in their community, organize that first class into a community organization so that they would meet once a month and could get information about what was going on in their community, what they needed to do, how they needed to pressure their local government about certain things, what they could get from the federal government. And to always try to bring someone in who had some information in those fields, so that it would be a continuing, educating process.

871 668 In the summer of 1961 the program was transferred to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. SCLC continued to do what we had started to do when we had the program at Highlander and that was have organizations send representation to them for a one-week workshop—for teacher training. Then they would go back into their areas. They came from Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi.

Mrs. Septima Clark

THE CITIZENSHIP SCHOOLS WERE THE BASE ON WHICH THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WAS BUILT

871 641 666 185 (875) We were trying to make teachers out of people who could barely read and write. But they could teach. The people who left these training sessions went home to teach and to work in voter registration drives. They went home, and they didn't take it anymore. They started their own citizenship classes, discussing the problems in their own towns. "How come the pavement stops where the black section begins?" Asking questions like that, and then knowing who to go to to talk about that or where to protest it.

871 668 641 666 185 One time I heard Andy Young say that the citizenship schools were the base on which the whole civil rights movement was built. And that's probably very much true.

It's true because the citizenship schools made people aware of the political situation in their area. We recruited the wise leaders of their communities, like Fannie Lou Hamer in Mississippi. Hosea Williams started out as a citizenship school supervisor. The citizenship school classes formed the grassroot basis of new statewide political organizations in South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi. From one end of the South to the other, if you look at the black elected officials and the political leaders, you find people who had their first involvement in the training program of the citizenship school.

It was 1962 before the major civil rights groups were ready to do something about voter registration. But we had developed the ideas of the citizenship schools between 1957 and 1961. So all the civil rights groups could use our kind of approach because by then we knew it worked.

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Mrs. Bernice Robinson

I DON'T THINK PEOPLE ON JOHNS ISLAND KNOW WHAT AN IMPACT THE PROGRAM HAD

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There were tens of thousands of teachers and students who went through that program. It lasted until 1970, and I think that what happened is that foundations thought that we had achieved what we were working for. We had the Voting Rights Bill and we had accomplished desegregation and we had gotten blacks elected to office in all these different states, so the money started drying up for the program.

The curriculum we developed on Johns Island became the curriculum that went all across the South. It was all the things the people had said they wanted to know and learn. I don't think the people on Johns Island know what an impact the program they were involved in had—how it went so far and so wide.

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Mrs. Bernice Robinson

ALL THIS IS AN OUTGROWTH OF PEOPLE FEELING EMPOWERED

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On Johns Island you see the results now really, the aggressiveness of the people and the confidence they had in moving forward, when you look at the sea island clinic, and you look at the senior citizen center and the nursing home and the housing project for senior citizens. All this is an outgrowth of people feeling empowered by being able to read and write and understanding how to go about pressing for things like that. They became very active in the PTA and things that they didn't bother with before because they couldn't read or they couldn't understand what was going down. Before they had a high school on the island, a lot of people who had relatives over here in the city would send the children over here to go to school, to try to get an education. And they had to do that for a long time before they got the high school.

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But all these things that finally came about, came about from these same people that learned how to read and write and fight for their kids to get a decent education right in their own home rather than having to cross the bridge to come into town to get an education.

Mrs. Ethel Grimball

WE'RE GOING TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATES WE WANT

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People are still voting today. Blacks now rule Wadmalaw Island for the Democratic party. Before this, the white people in the Democratic party brought a slate in and then they immediately passed that slate. My father and others said, "We're not going to go along with a slate that they bring in. We're going to vote for the candidates we want." And that's how we changed that situation on Wadmalaw Island. After the voter registration drives, the people got more interested in the importance of voting. Therefore, we got a lot of people on the books. Eighty-five percent of the population on Wadmalaw is black. Most of the whites left the Democratic party when the blacks got control of it. Before that the whites ruled everything on Wadmalaw Island. It was the tradition.

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533 Mrs. Hunter, or Ruth Bligen. Benjie would call, "Oh, see God's ark," and everybody would respond, "See God ark . . . Tell me how long . . . See God ark a moving." Every note had a wave to it, a curve of sound loaded with vocal power and emotion. Ruth Bligen always carried the high line and the sound of her singing reached you first, pulling the other, lower lines with her. When the chorus ended, the rhythm changed. What had been double rhythm format moved into three cross times. People rose to their feet, and their feet moved in one time, their hands crossed their foot pattern, and the melody operated at a more intense level on top of, or driven by, this multi-rhythmic activity.

114 Since that first visit I have returned to the island many times to work with Mrs. Hunter and also with Septima Clark and William Saunders, always guided by the work that began with Esau Jenkins' efforts to transform the lives of people of his home community and the cultural research of Guy and Candie Carawan, which went far beyond field collecting. In 1972 I returned to the island for the funeral of Esau Jenkins. I returned also to interview Mrs. Hunter, Septima Clark, and later the tobacco workers who had used "We Shall Overcome" in their union meetings and on the picket lines. On the island it was sung in their traditional song style, complete with the shout and as "I Will Overcome." While working on the Bicentennial Festival of American Folklife at the Smithsonian, I worked with Rev. Willis Goodwin to bring a congregation and a prayer band from Johns and Yonges islands to the festival during the summer of 1975.

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• 185 THE WORK of Esau Jenkins lives. The work of Septima Clark lives. You can see it in the health centers. You can see it in Bill Saunders' political work and the rise in the number of registered voters. You can see it in the development of Bernice Robinson as a leader, teacher, and candidate for office. Maybe Ethel Grimball is exactly what the school board needs; maybe she is the work of Septima Clark in the eighties and nineties. Today Gerald Mackey's description of teaching in the school system is reminiscent of Septima Clark's struggles with that same system years ago.

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